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ABSTRACT

Beeby's description of the four modes of operation of school systems is couched mainly in terms of teachers' conduct in the classroom. In translating this into administrative terms, only two levels are of prime importance, formalism and meaning. Formalism implies preoccupation with maintenance of existing procedures and policies, while meaning implies concentration on planning for improvement and ensuring that the goals of the system and their applications to school are understood. It is a fair generalization to say that Australian educational systems are in a transitional stage. They display many of the characteristics of the "meaning" stage, but often as an uneasy compromise with the past. Of the various aspects of the trend toward diffusion of authority through the educational system, the following measures are especially critical: 1) the establishment of school councils, 2) increased school responsibility for curriculum development, 3) increased school responsibility for inservice education, and 4) increased school control over staff development. (Author/JG)

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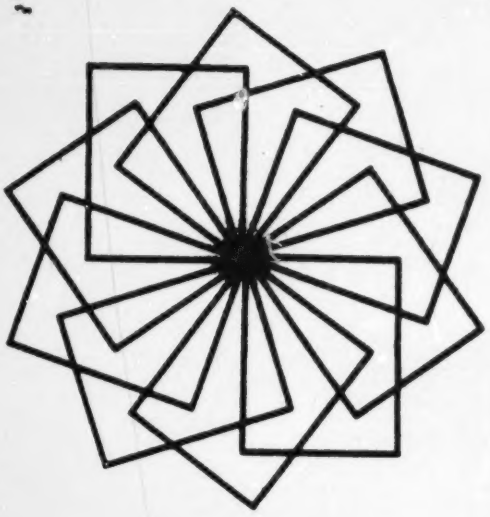

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EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

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EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
AND
THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

Australian Council for Educational Administration Conference

G.W. Bassett

Main theme of address: A major influence in a teacher's professional development in his experience of working in a professional environment. Educational administration can do a great deal to help create such an environment, particularly in strengthening each school's capacity to function responsibly.

My starting point is C.E. Beeby's* well known proposition that the stage of development of an education system is related to the quality of its teachers. He distinguishes four levels of quality among teachers (i) the ill-educated and untrained (ii) the ill-educated but trained (iii) the better educated and trained, and (iv) the well-educated and well-trained. Each is associated with a stage of development or mode of operation as follows:

Teachers	Stage of Development	Characteristics of mode of operation
(i) Ill-educated and untrained	Dame School	Unorganised; use of relatively meaningless symbols; very narrow subject content; 3 R's; very low standards; memorizing all important.
(ii) Ill-educated but trained	Formalism	Highly organized; use of symbols with limited meaning; rigid syllabus; emphasis on 3R's; rigid methods - "one best way"; one textbook; external examinations; inspections stressed; discipline tight and external; memorizing heavily stressed; emotional life of student largely ignored.

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* C.E. Beeby, 1966, The Quality of Education in Developing Countries, Harvard University Press.

Teachers	Stage of Development	Characteristics of mode of operation
(iii) Better educated and trained	Transition	Roughly the same goals as the stage of formalism but more efficiently achieved; more emphasis on meaning of what is taught but still rather formal; syllabuses and text-books less restrictive, but teachers hesitate to use greater freedom; final leaving examination often restricts experimentation; little in classroom to cater for emotional and creative life of the child.
(iv) Well-educated and well-trained	Meaning	Meaning and understanding stressed; somewhat wider curriculum; variety of content and methods; individual differences catered for; activity methods, problem solving and creativity; internal tests; relaxed and positive discipline; emotional and aesthetic needs provided for as well as intellectual; closer relations with the community; better buildings and equipment considered to be essential.

Beeby's description of the mode of operation of systems is couched mainly in terms of the teachers' conduct of their classroom. It will be helpful to translate this more fully into administrative terms. In doing this I have distinguished two levels only, those of formalism and meaning. Formalism, as applied to administration, may be interpreted as implying a preoccupation with the maintenance of existing procedures and policies. Meaning, as applied to administration, may be interpreted as implying a concentration on planning for improvement, and with ensuring that the goals of the system and their application to schools are understood.

Stage of formalism: High level of centralized control, particularly over staffing, curricula and examinations; low level of community involvement; official attitudes dominant with stress on status and seniority; routine maintenance of the system stressed rather than new developments; hence, a low level of planning, research and teacher development; imbred

in recruitment policies and isolated from practices elsewhere; accountability achieved through hierarchical controls and a tight system of inspection and supervision.

Stage of meaning: System more decentralized functionally and/or structurally, and at the same time readier to cooperate with other systems and with national policies; more open to community observation, criticism, and participation; more concern with progressive development and less with routine supervision and control; hence substantial provision for planning, research and in-service education, a wide range of support services such as advisory teachers, counsellors, librarians and media specialist; curricula designed more as guide than a prescription with encouragement of creative interpretation at school level; less emphasis on seniority and formal authority, more on cooperative personal relationships; accountability achieved partly through the official bureaucracy, but also by direct relationships of teachers to students, schools to their communities, and officials to the public.

Having set up this developmental scale, it is natural to ask where Australian systems are appropriately located on it. This is a difficult judgement to make. Some state systems may be more developed than others; some parts of the systems may be more developed than others. Educational systems do include strands with somewhat separate historical development (e.g. preschool, primary, secondary), and it could easily happen that their characteristics with regard to formalism and meaning do not coincide. I think it would be a fair generalization to make that our systems are in a transitional stage. They display many of the characteristics of the stage of meaning, but often as an uneasy compromise with their past, and new trends are not so well established that in times of strong conservative reaction against innovation, such as the present, they can be defended with confidence. It will be regrettable if, in the face of public criticism, we lose our nerve, and regress to a kind of education in which form is considered to be more important than substance and meaning.

Administration and the individual school

Of the various aspects of the trend towards diffusion of authority through the educational system I want to concentrate on some that are especially critical in helping to strengthen the autonomy of each school. In attempting this I do not believe that it can be established by administrative measures alone. The administrator has an enabling function, permitting new responses to become possible, and assisting with resources where these are needed. The new responses in this case all involve the acceptance of greater responsibility by principals and teachers. The gift of freeedom is one thing, the acceptance of it is another.

The measures chosen for comment are these; their order is not especially significant:

1. The establishment of school councils.
2. Increased school responsibility for curriculum development.
3. Increased school responsibility for in-service education.
4. Increased school control over staff recruitment.

1. The establishment of school councils

The creation of school councils (already operating in some public systems and in independent schools) would be a significant extension of the movement towards decentralization. They would increase the schools' sense of identity, and help to anchor them more firmly in their own community. Under these circumstances it would be more likely that teachers' accountability would be interpreted more professionally as responsibility to students and parents, rather than simply as formal responsibility to superiors.

The demarcation in councils between professional and lay responsibility is undesirable. For example, to rule that the curriculum is not a matter for school councils is to restrict their operation on a matter of vital concern, and one which in any case ultimately rests on societal sanctions. It would be naive to think that there will be no problems in the task of schools and councils learning to work effectively together (as the record of council-school disputes in Australia testifies). There must be mutual respect between lay and professional opinion, and of course both are subject to social controls (and ultimately) to government policies, but the rewards in the form of professional responsibility can be substantial.

2. Increased school responsibility for curriculum development

In speaking about increased school responsibility for curriculum development I shall try to avoid the phrase "school-based curriculum development". The use of labels tends to create a mythology of innovation in education which is mainly semantic in character. It worries teachers and the public alike who are unsettled by the use of new and needless terms.

In fact even under the most rigorous conditions of central control of curricula, the way in which they come to life in schools depends on the teachers and children concerned, the school organization, and the community involved. The most significant perspective on curriculum is that of the students who are experiencing it, and for them it is very much a function of the learning environment and the teachers' methods as well as the nature of the learning tasks attempted. In other words school-based curriculum development is nothing more, or less, than the organizing of school life and the planning of its programme. How flexible and stimulating this can be obviously depends on external constraints such as prescriptive curricula and examinations as well as an initiative within the school.

Central curricula should be framed in a way that recognizes the legitimate role of interpretation at the school level, and schools need to develop adequate planning procedures to cope with the increased responsibility that this entails. The centrally devised curricula, with implementation by schools, is likely to remain the major model for Australian practice, but curricula wholly initiated within schools offer great scope for meeting special needs in particular schools, in giving expression to the talents of particular members of staff and in experimenting with new types of courses that may lead subsequently to wider recognition.

The impact of an external examination and selection procedures of outside bodies are significant factors in facilitating or inhibiting school initiatives in curriculum development, but it is not possible to do justice to this topic within the scope of this address.

3. Increased school responsibility for in-service education

If each school is to be treated as a basic unit of effective functioning, innovative practice, and accountability, it seems obvious that substantial in-service effort should be directed towards improving it as a working organization with its complex interlocking relationships among all concerned with its well-being, - students, teachers, parents, auxiliary staff and parents.

In spite of this, the most familiar profile of in-service education is of collections of teachers or administrators brought together from different schools for lectures, conferences, workshops etc. The groups may have common features such as being out-of-date, occupying similar positions (e.g. deputy principals), being interested in particular jobs like librarianship, remedial teaching, administering education, and so on. It would be foolish to discuss this broadcast method as valueless, but almost certainly it pays low dividends for many who attend. What may seem interesting and relevant to teachers during the course is often either neglected or frustrated when the person returns to their school. Enthusiasm is lost when the person's new found knowledge or skill is not understood, or not wanted by those with whom he works. This mass improvement strategy needs to be planned more as a support to the needs of particular schools than as an independent activity.

The focus of in-service effort should be on schools as functioning organizations, assisting them to mobilize better their influence and to gain maximum benefit from the support services that are available. This would require the stimulating of critical self-examination on the part of the school staff (if it does not occur spontaneously), the identification of objectives and disabling factors, and practice planning for improvement with the aid of outside consultants. Using facilities outside in the form of courses, workshops, materials, specialist staff etc.in these circumstances would be relevant, and hence useful.

This school self-renewal model, as part of the more general model of profession-based in-service education, is likely to pay better dividends in professional development, in the long run at least. I see some danger in the oft stated expectations of tertiary institutions to be virtually universal provider of both pre-service and in-service education. This may seem to offer a short cut to success, but may prove in the long run to be expensive and ineffective. This is not to question the expertise of individuals from tertiary institutions, (and their contribution to the professional development of teachers through award type courses is not in question). The services of lecturers should be available, but the main base for in-service education should be in the profession, particularly in the schools, not in the tertiary institutions.

4. Increased school control over staff recruitment

Success with ventures involving staff planning requires a greater degree of control by the school over recruitment and retention of staff than exists at present (at least in state schools). Unsuitability of staff for a particular school restricts the prospects of worthwhile planning; instability of staff upsets plans proposed or introduced.

The administrative problems associated with the appointment, promotion and transfer of teachers are long standing, obvious and intractable, but they must be tackled with a new sense of urgency if recent emphases in greater school autonomy are going to have any success. Unless schools can be given more control over recruitment, and unless greater stability of staff can be achieved planning at the school level will continue to falter, and the most powerful influence on the professional development of principals and teachers will be kept weak.

Concluding comment

I conclude with a quotation from the 1975 Schools Commission Report. In discussing its special projects programme it states

> "...change is most likely to occur when action is based on the active participation of those involved, especially teachers, and therefore on their perception of the school situation. Problems should be defined, and solutions developed, by those who will have to convert ideas into effective action."

To that I can only say. "Amen".